

An Inconvenient Truth

November 28, 2006 by [lifeshifting](#)

Have you ever heard the phrase, “It’s my story and I’m sticking to it!” Of course you have. You may have even said it a few times in the course of your life, and you certainly have thought it a few times. I know that I have. More times than I like to admit. Truth be told—no pun intended—we all have a tendency to take ourselves and our ways of thinking quite literally. We invest a great deal of time and energy in creating a so-called “life” — a career, an identity, a philosophy, etc.—and, for the most part, we are loathe to alter it, give it up, or *shift* it, even though it may be killing us!

What I’m thinking about today is inconvenient, but true: We are addicted to our stories. We become our stories. Yet, at the very core of the process of transformation that I call, “*Life-Shifting*”, we must be willing to give up our stories. We need to see that our stories are just that: stories. We made them up in the first place, and we can unmake them quite simply (but not easily!).

Let me share an example with you, one where our attachment to our “story” about ourselves and our world is quite clearly getting us in trouble! Have you seen the movie “An Inconvenient Truth”? If not, please make every effort to see it. It is beautifully wrought and important stuff. In a clear case of Life-Shifting writ large, Al Gore has made an attempt, through the powerful narrative synthesis of cinema and science, to SHIFT us out of a cultural story that no longer serves us—the one that says that cutting down most of the trees on the planet and burning up all the fossil fuels simultaneously, **won’t have any deleterious effect on the environment**. Hello?! We in the developed countries have been so resistant to changing this narrative that we blatantly ignore all the signs that a new story is unfolding...a geological and climatological nightmare that includes epic floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and level “6” hurricanes (lest we remember that levels 1-5 were only recently made up!!!) When will we wake up, release the outdated story of how to go through life burning fossil fuels, and embark on a new adventure: the adventure of living sustainably on the only home we’ve got, earth?

In many ways, the entire process of *Life-Shifting*, and the art of self-renewal in general, is about developing a willingness to discard worn out stories that we get in the habit of telling ourselves. I have a friend who has finished all the schooling he needs to become a therapist and life coach, but for the past couple of years he has struggled with building a private practice and attracting clients. He does tell himself, and a few of his closest pals, that he wants to be successful in his new profession. I think, in fact, that the story of his new identity as a professional counselor is beginning to take hold, but there still seems to be something in the way of his practice taking off...and that something is this: *he fails to tell people about it!*

I submit to you that the key step in framing, crafting and adopting a new life-story for ourselves, once we’ve done the work of waking up, letting go, grieving, etc. (see earlier blogs) is to begin a key practice: share your story. Go out and tell people. I have

counseled my friend, that even if he doesn't quite fully believe it yet, he needs to tell everyone he meets—not just his close friends and confidantes—that he has a new profession. He needs to proclaim to the world, “I am a therapist. I am a life coach. I can help you change your life.” (I know him and he can!).

Stories are meant to be told. Stories are meant to be shared, and altered, and re-invented. And when a story has outworn its usefulness, this too must be said. [Laura Simms](#), a professional storyteller and performer that I had the opportunity to see “live” earlier this week at the New York City Shambhala Center, notes that when she brings stories to life in the classroom with young teens, she is shocked to find that they are sometimes overwhelmed by the experience. They are moved to tears, or have laughing fits, or just become overcome with emotion. It appears that they are somewhat unfamiliar with the *power of their own imaginations!* We may be oversaturated with media-soaked images from TV and movies, but unaware of our own innate human ability to come alive through story, to connect to strangers, the unknown, the future itself, through story-telling. Perhaps the ultimate gift of being human is just this: we can write our own story from beginning to end. We are not flat screen robots and life does not take place in “The Real World”. It begins in our minds, and in our hearts. Life is a journey of the soul that needs to be mirrored, explored and received by the world. Our stories deserve to be told.

So this week take a moment and ask yourself: what is the story I tell myself about who I am? And this: What is the story I tell others about who I am? Is it fresh, alive, vibrant, and filled with your fullest, loudest, most edgy potential? Is it stale and worn and in need of an upgrade? Only you can know the truth...and it may be rather inconvenient.

On the other hand, isn't it great to know that although it may be your story, YOU DONT HAVE TO STICK WITH IT!!!